

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing an ND filter having at least two kinds of films on a substrate, comprising the steps of:

forming a film of at least one layer having a gradation thickness distribution while rotating a slit mask integrally with the substrate; ~~and~~

forming a film of ~~the~~ an outermost layer without using the slit mask on the film of at least one layer having a gradation thickness distribution; and

subjecting the substrate after film formation to heat treatment in an atmosphere pressure and at a temperature of 100°C to 130°C.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of forming the film of the outermost layer is a step of forming a film with a constant film thickness.

4. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, wherein the step of forming the film of the outermost layer is a step of forming a film with an optical film thickness  $n \times d$  (~~n: reflectance~~ n: refractive index of film, d: mechanical film thickness) of  $\lambda/4$  ( $\lambda$ : wavelength of incident light).

5. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of forming the film of at least one layer having a gradation thickness distribution comprises the sub-steps of:  
forming a film of a first layer having a gradation thickness distribution while rotating a first slit mask integrally with the substrate; and  
forming a film of a second layer to the layer immediately below the outermost layer having a gradation thickness distribution in an opposite direction from the first layer while rotating a second slit mask shifted from the first slit mask integrally with the substrate.
6. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the slit mask has a sawtooth shape.
7. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the slit mask is a mask having a dotted pattern.
8. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein the diameter of the dots change stepwise or continuously.
9. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein a distance between centers of dots change stepwise or continuously.
10. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein the mask having the dotted pattern is used with a distance between the mask and the substrate set to a value in a range of 1 mm to 50 mm.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) An aperture device comprising:

a plurality of aperture blades which are relatively driven to change a size of an aperture;

and

an ND filter ~~according to claim 10~~ fixed to the aperture blades, wherein said ND filter comprises:

a substrate,

a film of at least one layer which is formed on the substrate and has a gradation thickness distribution, and

a film of an outermost layer which is formed on the film having the gradation thickness distribution.

13. (Currently Amended) A camera comprising:

an optical system; and

an aperture device according to claim ~~10~~ 12 which restricts an amount of light passing through the optical system.

14. (New) An aperture device according to claim 12, wherein the film thickness of the outermost layer is constant.